



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

2 Peter 1:1-4

Lesson 1

Spring 2020

"All Sufficient Salvation"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you, Seth. Our text this morning is 2 Peter, chapter 1, verse 1-4. As I said last week, we are beginning a series in this book. So I'm going to begin reading it, and then we'll have prayer.

Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. *(Now, this is the New American Standard Bible that I am reading. It has "by His own glory". If you have another version, it may translate it differently. I believe the English Standard Version has "to His own glory and excellence." But I think that this is probably better translated 'by'. It gives 'the means', 'the agency' that the Lord uses to call people, "by His own glory and excellence.")* For by these *(and the 'these' refers back to 'His own glory and excellence')*, ... by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

2 Peter 1:1-4

Now we have not had Sunday School for a number of weeks; and so parents, here's a question you can ask your children: 'Who does Peter say that Jesus is?' Now that's an important revelation, an important teaching that Peter gives us in this text. So, that's a good question to ask them at the end of this sermon, and the end of the Lord's Supper. So, think about that. Now let's bow in a word of prayer.

Father, we thank You for this great text of scripture, this great book that we will spend some time in in the weeks to come. And we thank You for the things it reveals about You just in these verses, about Your Son, who He is, and what He's done for us. What it reveals to us about Your sovereign grace, which is a fundamental doctrine to this text, and something we need to know and rest in. You are absolutely sovereign, and You are sovereign in our lives. You're not casually involved in them. You are intimately involved in every aspect of our life. And because of that we have great assurance. And I pray that You would encourage us with that, and particularly in this time in which we are living, these very unusual days that are full of uncertainty.

And yet, everything works according to Your plan. 'You work all things according to the council of Your will', Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:11. "All things." And so we have every reason to be encouraged in the midst of these difficult times, these days of uncertainty. Nothing's uncertain with You. You reign, You rule, and You're going to bring us through all of this. In the meantime, we're to rest in You. And we pray that the things that we consider this morning about our triune God and You're involvement in our lives will be an encouragement to us. Help us to understand the things that we've read, and how it all applies to us, and the significance of it for our daily life.

Bless us spiritually, build us up in the faith. We pray for that. And we pray for our material needs. Certainly they are great. And we pray, Father, that You would keep us all healthy, and keep us doing the things that we should do, and be wise in our behavior. And we pray for those, as we have for the past number of weeks, who have special needs who, due to sickness, due to procedures their physical condition has been weakened, that we pray for them Lord, You know our needs and our conditions, and we

pray that You would give special protection to those who are in special need of that. Course we're all in need of Your protection, and we pray for it, Lord, and pray that you'll keep us healthy. And then, in the not too distant future, the weeks to come, that You'll bring back together here.

Lord, bless our nation. We pray not only for the health of our nation, and pray that You would give healing to those that are sick and protect others, but bless the leaders of our nation with wisdom, that they will know when to proceed with opening things up. And we pray that You'd bless the economy. We pray for those who are without work, that You would open up opportunities for them to work in the near future. Bless those individuals, many in our own church, who have businesses. I pray that You would protect them and give blessing to those businesses, that they would proceed in the future and be profitable.

Lord, you know our needs, and we look to you to bless beyond anything that we ask or think. We can only pray with a certain amount of understanding. You know what's best, and we look to You and we rest in that. We thank You for all that we have in Your Son, and we learn what that is in our text this morning, and pray that You would bless us as we study it, and build us up in the faith. And we pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

One of the questions that we are all asking ourselves in this pandemic is, 'Do I have enough?' Do we have enough paper towels for the month? Do we have enough food for the family for the week? But even when this crisis passes ... and it will pass ... we'll still be asking the question, do I have enough—enough for college, enough for the car repairs, enough for retirement? That question is often asked of spiritual things, of the Christian life. Do we have enough? That answer is important, and it is, 'Yes'. A Christian has everything. We are fully equipped for faith and practice at the moment of our new birth.

That is an essential fact to know, and one of the main lessons of 2 Peter, which we will be studying for the next two months. For two months, because it is a small book,

just three chapters. It's similar to the book of Jude, which is even shorter. Both are found near the back of the Bible. And for those reasons, short and at the back, both books have been described as two of the least valued and noticed books of the New Testament. Well if that's so, then the church in general, and Christians in particular, have deprived themselves of great blessing and needed instruction.

2 Peter is a book that gives instruction on how to grow as a Christian. It warns of the dangers that we face in the Christian life, especially in regard to false teachers and their harmful heresy. But Peter tells us how to stand firm, and have a stable life, and grow. That involves knowing the future. So Peter has much to say about the Lord's return, and the hope of the world to come.

But he begins with the present, and emphasizes that we have everything we need now, today, for life and godliness. We are fully equipped to live the Christian life to the full. But teachers, convincing teachers, had come to churches, teaching something very different, that the believers there needed more, and they could supply what these Christians lacked.

Nothing has changed over the centuries. False teachers continue to promise something more, the 'missing link' in the Christian life, the 'key to success'. Peter knew these churches well. He had written to them before. He says that in chapter 3, verse 1, 'This is now the second letter I am writing to you.' If the first letter is 1 Peter, than the recipients are the same, Christians scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, all through Asia Minor, from the west coast to the northern coast, the central part of Asia Minor, or Turkey, where Galatia was located. So a wide audience. And he knew them quite well. But, to confirm to them that he is the writer of that first letter, and that what he wrote here has authority, he began by identifying himself, and giving his credentials.

The letter opens in the typical style of ancient letter writing. It begins with his name, Simon Peter. Then he identifies himself as "a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ". We shouldn't miss the order of those words. They have application to us. Peter

is first a servant, and then an apostle. Now servant is a title of dignity. Moses was called the Lord's servant. You see that all through the book of Joshua. Whenever he's referred to, he's referred to as the servant of the Lord. The prophets were God's servants. In Isaiah, the Messiah, Christ, is the servant.

Still, a bond-servant is literally a slave. It's the word *'doulos'*, and that word always means 'slave'. The ancient world was full of slaves. They were the largest class of men, at the bottom of Roman society. When we think of slavery, we think of cruel masters "wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces", to quote Lincoln. And there was that in Peter's day. Not always. Some slaves were educated and had nice jobs. But what was the same was the slave had no rights. He couldn't disown his master. The master had power over the slave, the power of life and death.

But Peter's service wasn't hard. It was light, because his master is good. In fact, real freedom is only found in our relationship with Him and being His servant. It is service in grace and power. Christians, without exception, are all servants of the Lord. It's the greatest blessing. And Peter's desire for his friends was that they would grow in their relationship and their service to the Lord, and to one another.

Sinclair Ferguson spoke of being in happy bondage to the love of the heavenly Father. God's love toward us that Christ demonstrates in His death for us. Peter owned that title servant, slave, because he was in happy bondage to the love of the heavenly Father, and the Son. And it was also a way of saying that he was like all of his readers, and like us, a servant. And yet, he was different. He was also an apostle, one of the 12, the unique group sent out by Christ as His representatives to establish the church. In Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 20 Paul wrote that the church was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Peter was one of those apostles, so he spoke for Christ. That's authority. An apostle, and yet, a servant for them.

That is an instructive combination of words. He had great authority, but he didn't use it to lord it over others. He served them, washed their feet, as it were. That should be true of all of us. It is Christlike. It is how we are instructed to live. But Peter knew that

it was right, because he knew that we are all equal in Christ. And he tells them that next. He says that they have the same kind of faith as he and the other apostles have.

He was speaking here of the act of faith, of believing, rather than the object of faith, the doctrine of the faith. If it were doctrine, then we would expect the definite article before the word faith, as in Jude, verse 3. There Jude wrote of 'contending for the faith, which was once for all handed down to the saints.' Here in 2 Peter, it's simply 'faith', without the definite article.

And what Peter was saying is there is no distinction between believers. We all have the same kind of faith, which is literally 'faith equal in value'. It is the same for all of us. Bigger in some, but the same faith for all, and able to grow in all. No one's more deserving than another. We are all equally debtors to the grace of God. And that is made clear by the fact that our faith is a gift. He says that they received it.

Now that word, 'received', clearly indicates gift. It was used of obtaining something by lot. It was used, for example, in Luke, chapter 1, verse 9, of the priest being chosen to serve in the temple by lot. They didn't earn the privilege. They didn't choose it. They were chosen for it by the casting of lots. Now that's the idea here. No one has faith by his or her own efforts or choice. It was not earned. It was allotted by God. It is a free gift of God's free and sovereign grace.

Now, of course, we are responsible to believe. And all who respond to the gospel do believe. They exercise their faith. They exercise their will according to their knowledge by trusting in Christ. But, their understanding and the movement of their will, their faith, is ultimately the work of God. He enlightens our minds and gives us the life and the will to act. Or as Donald Grey Barnhouse used to say, "God jiggled our willers." That's the teaching of the Bible. Ephesians chapter 2, verses 8 and 9, Philippians 1, verse 29, Acts 11, verse 21.

Maybe the most graphic or picturesque statement of that is in Acts 16 in verse 14 where we read about Paul coming to Philippi and he goes down to the riverside, where he found a few women meeting. That was all there was of the synagogue. Not enough people to actually form a quorum and have a synagogue. But there were a

collection of women. And one of them was the leading woman of the city, probably, Lydia, a merchant who sold purple dyes. Probably a very wealthy woman. And she was there, and Luke wrote in verse 14 that as she's listening to Paul speak, 'the Lord opened her heart to receive the things that were spoken by him.' He opened her heart so that she would receive, so that she would believe.

It is all of grace. And Christ is the source of that grace. Peter writes that. He writes that it is by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ. 'Righteousness' is an important word in the New Testament, particularly with the apostle Paul. He uses righteousness as God's righteousness in our justification. It's legal righteousness. It's a standing before God. It is the gift of righteousness, what some have referred to as passive righteousness, where we are declared righteous, just. It's not something that we achieve. It's something we receive.

Peter used it differently here, of the active righteousness of Christ. It is His justice or fairness in giving the gift of faith. Every believer has been equally privileged with it. Not one of us is inadequately equipped for the Christian life. From the smallest saint to the greatest apostle, we are equally children of God. And Christ is able to gift us with such great blessing because of who He is. Peter describes Him as 'our God and Savior Jesus Christ'. Now that's not a reference to two persons: God the Father, and Jesus, the Savior.

The grammar makes it clear that it's referring to Christ as both God and Savior. We have that, for example, in the personal pronoun, this single pronoun, 'our'. It's not 'our God and our Savior', but 'our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.' There is another verse that's very similar to that, Titus chapter 2, verse 13, where Paul writes "...of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus." Christ is God. He's not the Father. He's the Son. It's the mystery of the Trinity. They are two distinct persons of the one godhead sharing equally with the Holy Spirit, the one divine essence. Not three gods, but one God in three persons. And ... and this is Peter's point ... He, Christ, obtained faith for all believers equally, whether we are Jew or gentile, an apostle or a simple saint. We are equally privileged with the same saving faith, the same living faith, which shows the

Lord's impartiality. He doesn't favor one over another. He loves all His people the same, which is infinitely. There's not limit to His love for His people, individually.

Well that's the greeting. It's not a trite, typical formula that Peter uses to greet those who receive this letter. It's theological. It's all about grace and Christ, and that continues in verse 2 where Peter greets the people with a blessing. "Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;". Grace and peace are the realm in which the believer lives. We are not only brought to Him through grace, we continue in our relationship with Him by grace, which is undeserved. Grace is the unearned life-giving blessing of God. It's what, as one writer said, "Raises us from the ash heap to a throne of glory." And it is continuously granted to us.

That's the only way we can continue in the faith and in the new life that God has given us. And both grace and peace are connected to the knowledge of God. They cannot be separated from that knowledge of God. Peter was likely refuting the false teachers here, who claimed to have 'special knowledge' that would give blessing. But Peter was saying, we have peace only through the knowledge that he has and he teaches. He was an apostle. What he taught was apostolic. It was from Christ. He had a 'word', which is a word that refers to full knowledge. It is factual knowledge, but also personal knowledge, knowledge of a relationship.

Now we have that only in connection with Jesus Christ. We have a relationship with the godhead only through Jesus Christ. That's the gospel. There is no knowledge of God, no relationship with God apart from believing in Christ as Lord, as divine. Now that's not some new truth that Peter is introducing here. Peter taught that to this same audience before. It's the gospel. It's the good news. But he says later, in verse 12, "He will always be ready to remind them of these things."

We need that. We need to be continually reminded of the truth of God's Word, the doctrines of the faith. Because we're always in danger of forgetting that. We're always in danger of, over time, allowing them and our understanding of them to weaken. And there's always the danger of distortion of those doctrines by false

teachers. So, we need to be grounded in the basics. We need to be grounded in the truth. That is one reason, for example, that we observe the Lord's supper every week, to remind ourselves of the basic truth of the gospel. Lest we forget. Lest we begin to forget the grace of God, and lest we drift from the peace of God, we need to remember. And Peter reminds them.

It's only through the gospel that we gain real peace. And Peter wants it multiplied to them. Now that tells us the kind of peace that he's referring to here. It's not the peace we have with God. That's assumed here. At the moment of faith, we have peace with God. We're reconciled to God. And you don't grow in that reconciliation or that peace with God. It's absolute. At the moment of faith we have complete, absolute, eternal peace with God. But, as a result of that, we have the peace of God. That's daily peace, personal peace. And that does grow.

Our experience through grace is the enjoyment of that peace. It only increases as we know God increasingly. So, it does grow, it does multiply, as Peter says here. But it does that through the knowledge of God, as we increasingly have that knowledge. And Peter wants us to have that ever-deepening relationship with Christ. He closes the letter with an exhortation of that in chapter 3, verse 18, "...grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." And according to verse 3 here, we are fully equipped to do that. We are fully equipped to grow in grace, and have grace and peace multiplied in us, because we have all of the resources necessary for that. We have grace and peace seeing that, or because "...His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him who called us..." And He called us, Peter says, "...by His own glory and excellence." He calls us personally. But the means He uses to bring us to Himself is the revelation of His, of Christ's own glory and excellence, the revelation of His personal greatness. We're drawn to Him by that, as we understand it, as we see it.

'Knowledge' is very important in this letter. It's very important throughout the Bible, because it is the means through which the Lord's power comes to us, to give us everything that produces life and godliness. And that's the goal of knowledge. It is

godliness, it is holiness, it is goodness. In fact, the evidence that a person has true knowledge is seen not in all of the information that he or she can give, not in all of the facts that a person might recite. Facts are very important, but the evidence that one has the real knowledge of God is not in that, but in their behavior. If they are not godly, they don't possess real knowledge.

Those who know Him, those who know the Lord's glory and excellence are changed. They are transformed by that knowledge. Like that sinful woman in Luke, chapter 7, who learned that Jesus was dining in the home of Simon the pharisee, came uninvited, kneeled at Jesus' dusty feet, and washed them with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. Why did she give such a public display of devotion and set herself up for public ridicule? She had seen something. She had seen His glory and excellence, the purity of His character, but also the forgiveness of His love. She encountered His goodness. And in that she got a glimpse of His deity. And it compelled her to act in worship.

We need to study Christ. We need to know Him, which we can only do through faith in Him as God the Son and Savior. Again, you cannot know Him unless you know Him to be both God and man. In the late 18th and the 19th centuries, there was a movement called 'The Quest of the Historical Jesus'. Men were trying to find the real Jesus of history. Albert Schweitzer wrote a book by that title. He critiqued all of the writers and the schools of thought. He exposed the fallacy of their views. And then, at the end of the book, he gave his explanation of the real Jesus. He was just as wrong as the others.

They all began their search with the assumption that Jesus was not God. He was just a man. And then they tried to explain Him and explain the influence that He had. But if a person gives up His deity, he has lost Jesus and will never find Him. Only those who believe Christ is God and man know Him. Only God's grace can open a closed mind to believe that. But when it does, they see His glory, and come to Him irresistibly, where they gain godliness.

Now, when I say 'gain godliness', and when Peter is speaking of this, we don't mean gain perfection. We will stumble and fail all along the way throughout this life. Peter did, grossly. But the goodness, faithfulness will be there, and it will characterize the life of a believer. And the encouraging thing here is that He, Christ, has granted us 'everything pertaining' to it. We lack nothing. We have a sufficient salvation. The moment we were born again, we were born anew, whole and complete, like a baby born with all of its parts, two feet, two hands, two ears, everything. Now we're born small. We need to grow. Immature, we need to develop. But, we are fully equipped to do that, and to live the Christian life.

But often Christians live as though they aren't complete, as though they lack something. So teachers come along, promising 'the missing ingredient', promising 'the key' to the Christian life, 'the secret of success', 'the higher life', 'the second blessing', some charismatic experience. That is what these churches Peter wrote to were being told. Teachers, maybe Gnostic teachers, it's not certain, but probably something like that, were offering special knowledge, 'gnosis', that would elevate these individuals, these Christians spiritually. It was a lie. 'We have the knowledge', Peter says. We have the Holy Spirit who is our teacher, guide, and helper, our enabler, the one through whom we have the life of Christ.

We've been baptized into Christ. Every believer has. And in Him, Paul wrote in Colossians, chapter 2, verse 3, "...are hidden all of the treasure of wisdom and knowledge." And all of that is ours now. We lack nothing. As great as the trials may be, (and the trials in life may be overwhelming) —you read the psalms and you get a sense of that. You have this empathy with the psalms and the psalmist has this empathy with us, because he goes through trials. All of the different psalmist did. In Psalm 42, the writer of that psalm speaks of his trials in terms of 'all of God's waves and breakers have rolled over him'. You get this sense of a person caught in a whirlpool and being tossed about. That's life, and that's the problems of life.

Still, we are equipped fully for that. Doesn't mean the problems are resolved easily and quickly. They're not. And they may be protracted and go on throughout our

life. But we are 'equipped' to deal with them. God the Father is our provider and protector. Christ the Son is our High Priest and Good Shepherd. And in the church, Christ's body, we have fellow believers to encourage and support us with care and prayer. We have all the resources we need for a godly life in a world of temptation.

But in verse 4, Peter lists another resource we have—promises. "For by these he has granted to us," (or given to us), "His precious and magnificent promises." When Peter says it is 'by these He has granted to us promises', he means 'by the glory and excellence' he has just mentioned of Christ. So what attracts us to Christ, what drew us to Him, His majesty, His greatness, His goodness and power, also works for us to give us promises, and make them real in our lives. Peter calls the promises 'precious and magnificent'. Their value is beyond calculation or estimation.

So what are they? They are promises of redemption. Many of them are mentioned in this first chapter. They include promises of forgiveness. In verse 9, the coming of Christ and His kingdom. Our inheritance in verse 11. There's much more than that. But one promise given here in verse 4 is that we become partakers of the divine nature. Now that's an astonishing statement. What does it mean? Well first, it doesn't mean that we become gods. That is what some of the ancient heathen philosophers taught.

It's what Mormonism teaches today. The Mormons, or LDS, the Church of Jesus Christ of Later Day Saints, has 'apostles'. One of them was a man named James E. Talmage. He wrote a book titled, *The Articles of Faith*, and in it he made the statement, "We believe in a God who is progressive." In other words a God who grows, a God who develops in His knowledge. Then he wrote, "As man is, God once was. As God is, man may be." The promise of Mormonism to those who believe in their 'gospel' or their 'system' is that you can become a god.

Now, that's not just false, it is pagan. It's the non-Christian doctrine of a false religion. It very simply is the kind of thing, very similar I should say, to what Peter was dealing with in his day, and in this letter. He doesn't mean we become gods, but we become godly. The divine nature we share is in God's communicable attributes.

God has communicable and incommunicable attributes. His incommunicable attributes are those which He doesn't share with His creatures, like His aasciety, (which is His self-existence), or His immutability, (His changelessness). His communicable attributes are those that He shares with us and imparts by the new birth. We have knowledge, we have wisdom, we have power, we have goodness, holiness, love, intellectual and moral attributes. These are the properties of God that we share in. Not His essence, but His character. And by being His children, we grow increasingly in all of those attributes. And in so doing, show His likeness, Christ-likeness. This is the end to which the promises were given, so that we might become like Christ, share in and exhibit His character.

Peter ends, "Having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust." Corruption is caused by lust. That's the world. It's full of lust. It's driven by lust, by desire. It is a self-centered, self-seeking world. And that was all of us, originally. But we 'escaped', Peter said. We were delivered from that at the moment of regeneration. When we believed the gospel we were justified, we were joined to Christ, and joined to His life. And we have become new people.

Now that is true of every believer, without exception. We have escaped the old life completely, which should indicate to us the greatness of the new life that we possess. We are a 'new creation' in the words of Paul, 2 Corinthians 5, verse 17. This is the reason that we must exhibit the life of redemption. We have escaped the old life with its lusts. Since we have escaped it, we shouldn't let ourselves be enslaved to it again.

Granted there's still sin within us, in the flesh. A law in my members, or the 'members of my body', as Paul put it in Romans, chapter 7, in verse 23. We battle with it constantly and we will battle with it till the very end of our lives. But we are new people, with new abilities, and a privileged position as citizens of heaven, with a glorious citizenship now. We are ambassadors of Christ, as we travel through this world. Our citizenship is above.

So Paul says, in Romans, chapter 6, verse 11, (this is the first command that he gives in the Book of Romans), "...consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus." Recognize the reality of your new life, and live it. You won't live it if you don't recognize that you have it. You won't draw upon the great privileges and blessings you have if you don't know that you've got them. We already have the God given resources to do that. And so what Peter has said here, in these first four verses, is 'the Lord has given us everything'. He's given us faith, and it's a faith that lays hold of Christ in salvation, and a faith that continues in the Christian life, a growing faith. He's given us that. We have faith. He's given us true knowledge. And it's through that knowledge that life changing power comes to us, that produces godliness. And He's given us promises, promises that assure us of His help, and promises that assure us of a glorious and certain end to it all.

The more we know God's Word and know Christ, the more we will grow in godliness. The reason for that is, the more we know Christ, the more we will understand the love of God for us, His sovereign unconditional, life changing, saving grace. And then we will gladly obey, and serve Him, and one another, servants of all, because we will be in happy bondage to the love of the heavenly Father, and His Son. So, get the knowledge of Him. May God help us to do that.

But that begins with faith in Christ as our God and Savior. If you do not believe in Him, you have not escaped corruption. You are in it, and you're headed for the judgment to come. That is awful, and the thought is terrifying. It should be. Look to Christ. Trust in Him. Enter into new life and experience grace and peace. May God help you to do that. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

Father, we do thank You for Your goodness and Your grace. We face a world of temptation, but You have not left us unequipped. And in these first four verses of this second letter of Peter, we are reminded of that. We are instructed in that, that we lack nothing, as Your children. You have equipped us with all that we need for life in

godliness. And that should be our goal, and we should pursue that. And we will pursue that happily, gladly, the more we understand our triune God, and specifically according to our text, as we understand Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and all that He has done for us. He left eternal glory in heaven to become a man, live out His life with perfection, but live it so that He might come to the cross and die in our place. Thank you for that. Help us to understand that more, and in so doing, to desire to live a life that's honoring to You, a Christ-like life.

We thank You for all that we have in Christ. Bless us now as we will observe the Lord's Supper and remember His life and death for us. It's in His name we pray.

Amen.

(End of Audio)